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ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS

Letter dated 21 July 1994 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In view of the unprecedented gravity of the situation which the United Nations is facing with regard to the cash accounts of its peace-keeping operations, I am writing to draw to the attention of the General Assembly a series of emergency measures which I have felt impelled to take.

I am also writing to appeal to those Member States which have not done so, to pay their outstanding contributions promptly and in full.

On 6 July 1994, the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management brought this situation to the attention of the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, in the light of its responsibility for reviewing the budgets of peace-keeping operations and the apportionment of the costs thereof among Member States. He also appealed to Member States with outstanding contributions to make every effort to expedite payment.

As the Security Council is responsible for matters involving peace and security, I considered it essential that the Council also be advised of the seriousness of the situation and that the Council be asked to lend its support to the necessary actions. To this end, I addressed a letter to the President of the Security Council on 7 July.

A number of contributions which were expected from Member States in June were not paid. However, in the first half of July, some Member States made substantial payments of their outstanding contributions. None the less, at 15 July 1994, taking into account payments received after 30 June and one additional peace-keeping assessment issued for the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM), the level of unpaid assessments for peace-keeping operations still exceeded $2,033 million.

Unless, therefore, substantial contributions are received immediately, no cash will be available to finance peace-keeping operations by early August.

The missions that are in the most precarious situation are: the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II); the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ); the United Nations Operation in El Salvador (ONUSAL); the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL); the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM); and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

A minimum of $200 million a month is needed to sustain the various peace-keeping operations, without allowing for reimbursements to troop-contributing countries. An additional $100 million a month is required to effect such reimbursements. At present, the Organization does not have these funds. The Peace-keeping Reserve Fund and the funds available from the two completed operations, the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) and the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG), are quite inadequate for this purpose.

I have therefore come to the conclusion that, as an interim measure, it will be necessary to borrow from some ongoing peace-keeping operations, which have very limited resources themselves, to meet the immediate requirements of other operations.

I have also taken urgent steps to reduce or delay expenditure in the peace-keeping operations, as follows:

(a) All peace-keeping missions have been instructed to reduce expenditures to the maximum extent possible;

(b) All but the most urgent procurement is being postponed;

(c) Recruitment is being postponed in all but the most essential cases.

Every effort has been made in the last few months to accelerate reimbursement of troop costs. However, in view of the gravity of the current financial situation, I have no alternative but to ask Governments of troop-contributing countries to show forbearance.

I should like to express my sincere appreciation to those Member States which have responded promptly to the assessment letters which they have received. Unfortunately, however, such States constitute a very small minority of the membership of the Organization.

Substantial payments are needed urgently if operations are not to face financial collapse. I therefore appeal to Member States, particularly those with large outstanding contributions and those with special responsibilities for peace and security, to make every effort to expedite their payments and to do so soon.

All Member States have a collective responsibility to support, financially, the operations which they have mandated. Member States must honour their commitments now, if the Organization is to fulfil the tasks assigned to it.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI